

## Motivation Factors Influencing English Language Learning Among the Agriculture Students at Rajarata University of Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

Proficiency in English is integral to higher education in Sri Lanka, facilitating academic success and global engagement. Despite extensive instruction, the students' English language proficiency varies considerably, predominantly under motivational factors. Although prior research underscores the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in second language acquisition, a notable gap exists regarding their specific impact on university students within the Sri Lankan context. Therefore, this study attempts to address this gap by exploring the motivational determinants that affect English language learning among the undergraduates at the Faculty of Agriculture, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. Using a quantitative approach, the data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising 27 Likert-scale items, administered to a stratified sample of 250 randomly selected students. The research instrument formulated in this way helped to measure the elements of intrinsic motivation— such as curiosity and perceived relevance— and extrinsic motivators, including academic performance and future career aspirations. The data analysis involved descriptive statistics, reliability testing, ANOVA, and independent samples t-tests. The results reveal that intrinsic motivation significantly influences the students' engagement and proficiency in English, along with enthusiasm for the mastery of the target language and personal development. External factors, such as classroom environment and peer influence, also affect motivation to a lesser degree. Gender differences emerged, with females demonstrating higher motivation and perceived benefits. Challenges such as language anxiety and waning enthusiasm hinder participation; nonetheless, students recognize English's role in effective communication and personal growth. The findings thus highlight the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation and supportive learning environments to enhance language acquisition among the Sri Lankan university students through pedagogical strategies aimed at sustainable language proficiency development.

**Keywords:** English Language Learning; Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation; Motivation Factors; Sri Lankan University Students

## Introduction

English is a compulsory subject at all educational levels in Sri Lanka, covering reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Its importance has grown as a global communication tool and a measure of proficiency beyond exams. Students learn English for academic, professional, personal, and travel reasons, with motivation playing a key role in learning success. Since the 1990s, motivation has been recognized as vital in second language acquisition and achieving personal goals. At Sri Lankan State Universities, English education varies by program; some offer it only in the first year, while others continue throughout the degree. Some programs include intensive English courses at the start. For example, at Rajarata University's Faculty of Agriculture, students undergo a two-month intensive English program, followed by courses like General English I & II, English for Higher Education, and Professional English across their studies, providing ample opportunity to develop skills. Despite similar instruction, students show different proficiency levels, largely influenced by motivation factors like career goals and peer influence. According to Oletić and Ilić (2014), motivation in language learning comprises two primary forms: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation arises from internal factors, such as personal interest and the inherent enjoyment of learning. External rewards, such as grades, praise, or future benefits, drive extrinsic motivation. Simbolon, Nina, and Ramadhani (2019) emphasized that both types of influence behavior and student development, with extrinsic motivation fostering competitiveness and intrinsic motivation encouraging genuine engagement. This study aims to identify the motivational factors affecting English learning among Agriculture students at Rajarata University, offering insights to improve language acquisition strategies in higher education.

In Sri Lanka, university students need strong motivation to actively learn English, as a lack of interest can reduce engagement and hinder progress. Both internal factors (like interest and self-efficacy) and external factors (such as peer support and teacher encouragement) influence motivation. This study examines how these factors affect agriculture undergraduates at Rajarata University's English learning, focusing on their engagement and interest. Accordingly, the research questions of the study are:

- What motivational factors influence English language learning among agriculture students at Rajarata University?
- What learning processes and classroom factors can be implemented to enhance motivation and improve English language proficiency among these students?

## Materials and Methods

### *Population and Sample Size*

This study used a survey to analyse motivation among 250 agriculture undergraduates at Rajarata University. The 27-item Likert scale questionnaire covered motivation, learning, and benefits. Conducted during lectures, the study aims to improve motivation strategies and language skills by examining intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors.

### *Research Instrument*

Rajarata University's diverse student body provided a representative sample of foreign language learners. Using simple random sampling, 250 agriculture undergraduates from all years completed a 15-minute Likert scale questionnaire.

The questionnaire, which was based on a 27-point Likert scale, had three items focusing on motivational factors, the learning process, and benefits, which also included items for personal information. The Likert scale options were as follows:

1= Strongly disagree (SD)

2= Disagree (D)

3= Neutral (N)

4= Agree (A)

5= Strongly agree (SA)

The participants completed the questionnaires individually during class, with the researcher distributing them with the instructors' permission. Each participant took approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

### Data Collection

The data were collected from the survey questionnaire and used to explore the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on learning English as a foreign language.

### Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analysed via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to present the frequencies and percentages of questionnaire items.

### Results

The following results are interpreted through mean rank interpretation.

**Table 1:** Reliability of the Questionnaire

Categories	Number of items	Alpha
Motivation Factors in Learning English (MFLE)	13	.622
Learning Process in Learning English (LPLE)	6	.647
Benefits of Learning English (BLE)	8	.626

**Table 2:** Mean Rank Interpretation

4.01-5.00	A high degree of satisfaction with English Learning
3.01-4.00	A fairly moderate degree of satisfaction with English Learning
2.01-3.00	A moderate degree of satisfaction with English Learning
1.00-2.00	Low degree of satisfaction with English learning

**Table 3:** Respondents' Demographic Profile

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	176	70.4
	Male	74	9.6
Age	Below 20-22	154	61.6
	23-25	85	34.0
Year of Study	First Year	67	26.8
	Second Year	45	18.0
	Third Year	92	36.8
	Fourth Year	46	18.4

**Table 4:** Motivational Factors in Learning English

Items	Statements	Level of Agreement %					M	SD
		SD	D	N	A	SA		
MFLE1	I'm excited to continue my English learning journey in the future.	0.4	1.6	7.2	45.2	45.6	4.34	.717
MFLE2	I enjoy actively participating in English lessons by sharing my thoughts.	1.2	4.0	30.4	48.4	16.0	3.74	.817
MFLE3	Learning English is a priority for me.	0	5.2	29.2	46.4	19.2	3.8	.808
MFLE4	My curiosity fuels my success in learning English.	0.8	1.6	12.0	55.2	30.4	4.13	.739
MFLE5	Honestly, my motivation for studying English is solely to pass exams.	7.2	28.8	34.4	24.4	5.2	2.92	1.01

MFLE6	I may have a preference for studying in my native language.	7.2	21.2	35.2	24.0	12.4	3.13	1.10
MFLE7	Honestly, I have very little enthusiasm for my English lectures.	24.0	42.8	23.2	6.8	3.2	2.22	.99
MFLE8	I feel tense whenever I need to speak during my English lectures.	12.4	26.0	41.6	17.2	2.8	2.72	.98
MFLE9	English helps me express myself more confidently.	0.4	2.0	17.6	59.6	20.4	3.98	.70
MFLE10	I feel comfortable participating in English lecture discussions by answering questions.	0.8	5.6	28.8	51.2	13.6	3.71	.80
MFLE11	I aspire to speak English fluently.	1.2	1.2	6.4	34.0	57.2	4.45	.77
MFLE12	I experience embarrassment when speaking English in front of my peers.	3.2	10.4	25.6	37.6	23.2	3.67	1.04
MFLE13	However, learning English allows me to connect new information with my existing knowledge, fostering a deeper understanding.	1.2	1.6	14.0	54.0	29.2	4.08	.77

Table 4 indicates that a significant proportion of students expressed enthusiasm for continuing their English studies (MFLE11: 45.6%) and attributed their success to curiosity (MFLE4: 55.2%). Additionally, 57.2% aspire to speak English fluently (MFLE11), demonstrating strong intrinsic motivation. While extrinsic factors, such as studying solely to pass exams (MFLE5: 28.8%) and prioritizing English (MFLE3: 46.4%), are also evident, intrinsic motivation remains more prominent. Challenges identified include tension (MFLE8: 41.6%), lack of enthusiasm (MFLE7: 24.0%), and embarrassment in peer settings (MFLE12: 23.2%). Nonetheless, many students reported that learning English helped them relate new knowledge to their existing understanding (MFLE13: 54.0%). High levels of engagement were reflected in their enjoyment of sharing thoughts (MFLE2: 48.4%) and actively participating in discussions (MFLE10: 51.2%).

**Table 5:** The Learning Process in Learning English

Items	Statements	Level of Agreement %					M	SD
		SD	D	N	A	SA		
LPLE14	I struggle to independently summarize the key points in English subject material.	1.2	4.4	31.2	52.4	10.8	3.67	.774
LPLE15	English lecture covers a lot of ground.	0.4	2.0	8.0	56.8	32.8	4.20	.698
LPLE16	I find English a challenging language to learn.	2.0	14.0	32.8	44.0	7.2	3.40	.888
LPLE17	I experience embarrassment when speaking English in front of my peers.	0.4	1.6	12.4	54.0	31.6	4.15	.721
LPLE18	However, learning English allows me to connect new information with my existing knowledge, fostering a deeper understanding.	0.4	1.6	8.4	47.6	42.0	4.29	.722
LPLE19	I experience embarrassment when speaking English with my peers.	0.4	5.6	23.2	52.4	18.4	3.83	.806

Table 5 shows that 56.8% of students agreed that learning English enhanced their understanding by linking new information to prior knowledge (LPLE18). A considerable number of students found English classes challenging (LPLE16: 32.8%) and experienced embarrassment when speaking English in front of peers (LPLE17: 12.4%) and with peers (LPLE19: 23.2%).

**Table 6:** Benefits of Learning English

Items	Statements	Level of Agreement %					M	SD
		SD	D	N	A	SA		
BLE20	I believe individuals who speak multiple languages possess significant knowledge.	2.0	3.2	22.8	42.8	29.2	3.94	.910
BLE21	Learning English aids me in effectively communicating in the language.	0.8	1.6	15.6	54.0	28.0	4.07	.755
BLE22	I can think critically and analyze content in English.	0.4	6.4	34.4	47.2	11.6	3.63	.787
BLE23	I desire to have numerous friends who speak English.	0.8	3.6	26.8	47.2	21.6	3.85	.825
BLE24	I have a genuine interest in learning English.	0.8	1.6	12.4	56.0	29.2	4.11	.736
BLE25	I sometimes procrastinate on my English homework.	4.0	16.8	32.8	36.0	10.4	3.32	1.003
BLE26	When I miss lectures, I refrain from asking my friends or lecturers for homework assignments.	14.4	32.8	22.4	20.8	9.6	2.78	1.206
BLE27	I believe English contributes to my overall personal development.	0.4	2.4	8.4	51.2	37.6	4.23	.735

Table 6 shows mean (M) values from 2.78 to 4.23, indicating varying agreement levels on English learning benefits. The highest is for “English contributes to my personal development” (BLE27) at 4.23, showing strong agreement. “I have a genuine interest in learning English” (BLE24) has a mean of 4.11, reflecting its importance. “Learning English helps me communicate effectively” (BLE21) has a mean of 4.07. The statement “When I miss lectures, I refrain from asking for homework” has a mean of 2.78, indicating moderate agreement and highlighting students’ recognition of English’s role in their learning and their efforts to benefit from it.

**Table 7:** One-way ANOVA among First Year, Second Year, Third Year and Fourth Year students

The Motivational Factors	Between Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
		.27	1	.27	1.99	.15
	Within Groups	34.30	248	.13		
	Total	34.58	249			
The Learning Process	Between Groups	.28	1	.28	1.31	.25
	Within Groups	53.22	248	.21		
	Total	53.50	249			
The Benefits	Between Groups	.63	1	.63	.28	.59
	Within Groups	53.62	248	.21		
	Total	53.68	249			

Table 7 shows the results of the one-way ANOVA test used to compare the means of the motivational factors, the learning process, and the benefits among First Year, Second Year, Third Year and Fourth Year students. For motivational factors, there was no statistically significant difference in motivation across the various levels of students ( $f(1,248) = 1.995$  &  $p = .159$ ). Similar to the previous one, there is no particular significance among other different class levels for the Learning Process ( $f(1,248) = 1.310$  &  $p = .254$ ). In terms of benefits, there was no statistically significant difference among the various levels ( $f(1,248) = .289$  &  $p = .591$ ).

**Table 8:** Independent Sample t-test between Genders

Variables	Gender	Mean	SD	T	Sig
The Motivational Factors (MF)	Male	3.59	.302	-1.412	.007
	Female	3.66	.501	-1.164	
The Learning Process (LP)	Male	3.95	.377	1.144	.001
	Female	3.87	.623	0.944	
The Benefits (B)	Male	3.73	.393	-0.538	.005
	Female	3.77	.603	-0.455	

Table 8 shows gender differences in motivation, learning, and perceived benefits. Significant differences were found: females scored higher in motivation ( $M = 3.66$ ,  $SD = .501$ ) than males ( $M = 3.59$ ,  $SD = .302$ ;  $t(248) = -1.412$ ,  $p = .007$ ); males scored higher in learning ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = .377$ ) than females ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = .623$ ;  $t(248) = 1.144$ ,  $p = .001$ ); and females again scored slightly higher in perceived benefits ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = .603$ ) than males ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = .393$ ;  $t(248) = -0.538$ ,  $p = .005$ ). Intrinsic motivation, like curiosity and the value of English, motivated 54% of students, while extrinsic motivation was less influential (28.8%). Barriers included classroom tension (41.6%) and embarrassment (23.2%). Many students enjoyed discussions (51.2%) and saw English as a link to prior knowledge (56.8%). The study recommends creating supportive, interactive environments to reduce anxiety and increase motivation, noting the need for further research on age and gender differences.

## Conclusion

This study aimed to identify key challenges and evaluate the effectiveness of English language learning among university students, focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Analyzing data from 250 students using quantitative methods and statistical techniques showed that intrinsic motivation plays a more significant role in influencing English learning. The study also highlighted variations in learning styles and satisfaction across the four main English skills, with students' intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes fostering their commitment to language development. Despite diverse learning approaches, students shared common goals and recognized personal benefits from English courses, emphasizing the importance of motivation for academic success. The researchers carefully addressed various aspects of the research process, overcoming challenges during data collection and analysis. The Faculty of Agriculture at Rajarata University was selected as the primary site for its relevance, although the study acknowledges that not all factors influencing motivation were explored. The researchers recommend further investigations to deepen understanding in this area, emphasizing the need for ongoing research to enhance English proficiency, which is vital for global business and international communication.

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